

**EULOGIUM**

ON

**GOVERNOR CLINTON.**

*Recd*

*Feb 21<sup>st</sup> 1828*



## EULOGIUM.

—000—

The following beautiful Eulogium, is from the pen of S. Simpson, Esq. of Philadelphia, and is reprinted in this form, to ensure its preservation among those who appreciate the talents of the writer, and the splendid abilities and patriotic services of our beloved CLINTON.

When a great public benefactor descends to the tomb, it is the republic that suffers; and the void occasioned by his death, is justly lamented as a national calamity. The people mourn for their country and themselves, and seek consolation for their loss, in the soothing contemplation of the greatness and virtues of the illustrious citizen, whose fate they deplore, and whose patriotism they venerate. There is a melancholy pleasure in recalling to our gaze, the splendid attributes of a departed sage; and giving an intellectual form and image to the immortal worthy, whose corporeal substance has passed away to mingle with the elements that composed it.

To die, is the fate of all men—a fate, fixed by the unalterable decrees of nature, which, nor power, nor rank, nor genius can avert; but to die full of years, and crowned with honors, an object of envy to the great, of admiration to the million, of rivalry to the ambitious, beloved by friends, venerated by the world, and lamented by all who appreciate virtue, genius, and learning—is the chosen destiny of the select few, whom God has endowed with the high and commanding attributes of mind, and exalted in the sphere of humanity, by combining virtue with genius, and benevolence with science. To descend to the tomb thus full of glory, thus followed by the tears and the lamentations of millions of free people, is not to die, but rather to change an earthly for an eternal existence; and to come into the inheritance of that immortality of renown, which is the reward of a life, nobly spent in promoting the felicity of the species, advancing the prosperity of the nation, giving vigor to freedom, and durability and perfection to our free institutions.

Thus has descended to the tomb, De Witt Clinton; a man, who, in whatever light we view him, strikes the beholder with

the traits of genius, and the altitude of greatness. As a politician, who could outstrip him in the race of glory? As a statesman, where shall we seek for his equal, or his superior? As a man, who is more virtuous, amiable, engaging, benevolent, and urbane. As a scholar, who can boast learning more profound, judgment more solid, taste more refined, imagination more creative, invention more sublime and beautiful, and composition more classical, eloquent, and melodious—simple in its proportions, but beautiful in its structure—like the temples of Greece, replete with grace and grandeur, but so chaste that all traces of labor were lost in the brilliancy of its effect.

Possessed of a capacious mind, an ardent fancy, a store-house of knowledge, a flowing elocution, and a commanding oratory; combined with superior personal advantages, inclination pointed to the world of politics as the orbit of his glory. Who can control his destiny? The impulse was that of genius. The highest range of duties are grasped by the highest range of faculties. The art of government is the sublimation of human wisdom; and the highest conceptions can alone wield the destinies of mankind, to improve, benefit, and bless them. Clinton's genius was not of that *secondary class* of greatness, which passively administers a system already formed and established, with prudence, order, and harmony. This is the part of ordinary statesmen, who are fashioned by the square and compass of the schools. The gigantic vigor of his genius could not rest to turn the wheel of a machine, which for a thousand ages had regulated the government of mankind, in one unvaried order of stationary mediocrity. His mind was created to soar, and by necessary consequence, the bent of his genius was to improve mankind by new creations. Thus, he has stamped the impress of his genius on the age in which he flourished. A waste of useless waters lay embedded on the earth, accidentally beneficial in a partial degree to the powers of man—but directed, governed, and regulated by the genius of Clinton—they became the fountain of abundance, the source of individual opulence, and the basis of national grandeur. Equally waste lay the common tract of the HUMAN MIND; here and there enlightened with a solitary ray, but the great mass presenting a dense and gloomy aspect of ignorance and turpitude. Struck by the wand of his genius, this inert mass has become an active body of intellectual vigor, and moral worth. EDUCATION spread her beams over the surface, at the command of Clinton, and all became light, life, and loveliness. In the same manner did he produce harmony out of the chaos of our Federal Constitution, by devising that fundamental amendment which discriminated the election of the President from the Vice-President of the United States.

For the last thirty years, the name of De Witt Clinton is associated with the conflicts of party, the improvements of our Federal Constitution, the diffusion of knowledge, and the acceleration of our prosperity. To him, are the people indebted for the first



impulse given to an opposition to the abuses, usurpations, and dictatorial tyranny of the *central power*. And to him, shall we be still more largely indebted, for such an amendment of the national compact, as shall limit the eligibility of the President to *one term*; thus cutting off at the roots, all intrigue, corruption, and venality.

Deeply versed in national law, Mr. Clinton was highly distinguished for his legal acumen; a quick perception of great general principles, and the essence and substance of what is understood by the term *Jurisprudence*. No man in the country could boast superiority to Clinton, in all that related to the science of government, and none could claim to be his equal in the *art of government*, two very distinct branches of intellectual power, and but seldom found united in the same individual.

Such is the grand outline of the colossal genius of DE WITT CLINTON. In filling up the picture, countless charms attract the eye, and splendid incidents, while they captivate the fancy, also enchain the heart.

As a politician, Mr. Clinton was ambitious of fame and power, and no aspiration was ever supported by claims so just, and talents more brilliant. Local politics, however exalted, could not prevent those claims of the country, from calling him to become a candidate for the highest honors of the nation. But here the rancour of party spirit interposed the barrier of bigotry to his elevation. Inferior men combined to check his career; and the machinery of faction succeeded in exalting to power, the secondary class of inefficient statesmen, who, without such artificial means, must forever have remained in obscurity. But even combinations would have failed to ostracise him, without the auxilliary force of calumny. The cry of ambition was raised by the *ambitious*, to cover their own venality, and screen their intrigues and bargains: and a man, who never thought of power, but to do his country service, was offered up a victim upon the altar of faction, to appease the indignation of demagogues and factionists.

Among the chief constituent qualities of greatness are moral courage, energy and decision. The noblest invention may project, the acutest ingenuity devise schemes of national utility; but they will burst into air, unless reinforced by vigor of execution, and inflexible determination. These attributes appeared in bold relief in the character of Clinton. When he projected his grand canal system, fools were convulsed with laughter, and factionists thundered their malediction through the union. But the great mind of Clinton, remained firm and immoveable, sustained by the consciousness of his superior genius, and the force of a colossal intellect, that could see what others were blind to.— Few men possess this *moral courage* in so extraordinary a degree as did De Witt Clinton, because few men are so lavishly endowed with the omnipotence of genius. He lived to see the laughter of fools converted into adulation of his wisdom; and the growls

of party change to the acclamations of applause. I speak truth—if any are offended, let them seek consolation in repentance and self-humiliation.

It was owing to this superior trait in his intellect, that he was enabled to vanquish opponents, surmount obstacles, and remove difficulties in the path of his vast designs, that common talents would have sunk under. It was this trait that gave him such powerful command over circumstances, persons, and events; and stamped him with the attribute of *action*—that attribute which is peculiar to genius of the first order, without which, invention evaporates in theory, and wisdom dwindles to the imbecility of an abstract rule—without which, eloquence is grovelling, and learning useless.

I am aware that the grave has but just received the remains of Clinton; and that in thus doing justice to his memory, that I tread upon the live coals of the burning lava of faction. It is too early to write the history of this illustrious man—but it ought not to be too early to pay the homage of truth to his real merit. Envy, and fear, and rivalry, die with the object that excited them; and while his grave is yet open, every political chieftain ought to advance to the brink, and cast in his poisoned javelin, invoking the forgiveness of the Great Spirit, whose giant power made inferiors tremble, and equals, if he had them, hate! But this is past. The ice of death withers the malice of the heart, and plucks calumny from the tongue of envy.

But the patriot, in delineating the great traits of such a character as Clinton, is instinctively prompted to inquire, how it has happened, that a statesman thus fashioned in nature's brightest and richest mould, never attained the highest summit of distinction, to which the people were desirous of exalting him? History responds an answer in the banishment of *Aristides*, in the fate of *Cato*—but he desires to know the real cause, not the analogous effect of injustice and proscription! He *seeks* for it in the history of parties, and he *finds* it in the depravations of government; he beholds it in the *supremacy of a CENTRAL POWER, superior to, and above the people—in the intrigues of CABINET CORRUPTION—in the law of CABINET SUCCESSION—in the HEIRSHIP of Secretary panders to Presidential demagogues*—and he closes the volume of his country's history, with a sigh, a blush, or an imprecation!

But let me hush indignation on a theme, where every syllable should breathe nought but harmony, to be in accord with the spirit whose departure we deplore; and where every feeling should melt to the sweetness of the benignant temper that glowed in the bosom of this pure patriot. Thank God, his glory required no such distinction to make it full and perfect. CLINTON will outlive, and outshine those whose names are inscribed on the roll of presidential honors—for his name and his genius are stamped on the face of the nation—wherever a river rolls its waters to feed a canal, wherever a college, or a school rears its little

spire, or lofty dome, to indicate its *spiritual aim*; wherever liberty is loved, and the rights of the people prized, the name of CLINTON will live—not in mouth honor only—but in the deep affections of the heart—in gratitude for his public benefactions and services; in admiration of his genius, and in veneration for his philanthropy.

Let no one so far mistake, as to suppose I am attempting to write the eulogium of De Witt Clinton! I am not qualified for the task; I have no set phrases and drilled thoughts, suited to the theme. Nor does Clinton require an eulogium. There too, he is superior to most men, on whom the world, with little discrimination, lavish the title of *great*. His eulogy is written on the page of the nation—not the page of history—but on the face of our soil, on our rivers, our canals, our literature, our science, our legislation, our institutions, and our charters of liberty. No, thank God, Clinton's glory requires no presidential honors, no eulogium's extravagance to make it full, splendid and perfect.—From my soul do I pity the man, who appreciates genius by the standard of office, or bestows upon office, the homage that ought only to be consecrated to genius.

And yet CLINTON ought to have been President, for the sake of the country. Because his faculties were fashioned on a great scale, and he was capable of doing great things. Because he was *one of nature's colossal works*; and like WASHINGTON, JACKSON, NAPOLEON, and other illustrious sons of genius, was created to benefit, bless and enlighten the country he adorned. The greater his sphere of action, the greater would have been his usefulness; and we may judge of the transcendent extent of his power, when we consider that even as the Governor of a State, he has done more FOR THE WHOLE NATION, than all the Presidents who have held the *hand of legitimate imbecility*, to the wheel of passive government.

In relation to the state of NEW-YORK, the works, the name and the glory of CLINTON, must form a stupendous monument of pride and renown! Why? When that question is put, or an answer wanted, all monuments will be useless—all worth of no account—all virtue a chimera—all genius a phantasm!

As an ORATOR, we have no men who are superior, few equal to CLINTON. On the floor of the Senate, he has convinced, captivated and carried away an audience. In this respect he was far above Washington. In literature and science, he was also superior to the great father of his country; as an *author*, no American, no European writer, soars above him. Firm, dignified and self-collected, he expressed breathing thoughts in burning words.

In the SCIENCES, he was deeply versed; botany, chemistry, mathematics, and the various adjunct departments had been conquered by his genius to his absolute control.

Polite literature and poetry claimed him for a pre-eminent disciple. In the bower of the muses, it was the highest delight of the patriot statesman to repose after the toils of government.—



His ambition was to excel all others in literature, science, and the art of government!

Acting on the maxim, that *knowledge is liberty, and liberty power*, he prosecuted with untiring assiduity the task of diffusing *education*! Convinced that public virtue, and moral purity, are in proportion to intellectual improvement, he aimed to promote the happiness of mankind, by making them wiser and better.

Grandeur captivates the imagination. VIRTUE wins the heart. Who can refuse to be an enthusiastic devotee at the shrine of glory? Who can abstain from burning the incense of affection on the altar of *morality*? Clinton is a rare example of private virtue in a great public character. His life was unblemished by a spot on his honor, or a stain on his morals! Does such a man require a eulogist? What combination of the sublime and beautiful can excel such a picture of a *patriot citizen*, consecrated to the enduring admiration of posterity?

As a friend his heart was warm, his attachments eternal, or as firm and unalterable as his life. But my object is not a display of his private virtues; yet we may remark without infringing on the limits of our subject, that Clinton amidst his household gods, was not inferior to Clinton as the statesman, the politician, the patriot, the scholar and the philosopher.

Yes, he was a *great and a good man*, a brilliant star of genius, and an exemplary model of virtue: *this is true greatness*! And who can hold back the tear that gushes to the eye, when such a man falls? It is the tribute due to humanity! Could I not weep over the fate of Clinton, I should myself be a recreant to my species—but, perhaps, you knew him not, perhaps his excellent heart never warmed your bosom—perhaps you only knew him through the voice of fame! Then weep over poor humanity, that such a light should be extinguished in all the glory and fullness of its cheering blaze, by one rude blast of death! Frail mortals! Ye stand in the greatness of genius, emulating the gods in power and intelligence—when lo! one breath from the trumpet of fate, hurls ye into nothingness. Pay a tear, at least, to your own frailty!

But I have transcended the bounds of an unstudied and spontaneous tribute of respect, for the genius of a great public benefactor! It is not the effusion of a weekly journal that can do justice to the talents, learning and actions of DE WITT CLINTON. That task is reserved for the biographer and historian. But the homage of the heart will break forth—the tribute due to the patriot must be paid by the citizen. His talents always extorted our admiration—his sudden demise has struck us with astonishment and covered us with gloom.

Before concluding this article we cannot but express a hope, that the intimate connection subsisting between *Clinton and Jefferson* will now be revealed to the public; and that their mutual correspondence will be published, as illustrative of the opinions and characters of two of the greatest worthies of the republic.